



Newsletter September 2020

Brighton and Hove Green Spaces Forum (BHGSF) is a volunteer organisation providing an independent voice and communication hub for volunteer groups working with Brighton & Hove's parks and open spaces.

Green space volunteer working – Covid 19 update.

On 17th July the Forum Emailed all members with details of the new B&H CityParks Covid volunteer working risk assessment and guidance notes. This made clear that whilst green space volunteers were able to work individually in some situations, a return to full group working was not yet permitted.

The latest update from CityParks is that they are working towards re-starting group working in October. This is dependent though on the Brighton & Hove Covid Alert Level remaining at Green or Yellow.

The CityParks Covid 19 Volunteer Risk Assessment can be found here

<http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Covid-19-Volunteering-Risk-Assessment.pdf>

Guidance notes for the Covid 19 Risk Assessment can be found here

<http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Guidance-notes-for-Cityparks-Volunteers-Covid-19-final.pdf>

Brighton & Hove Covid Alert status details can be found here <https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/covid-19-key-statistics-brighton-hove/current-alert-level-and-guidance>

Elm disease ravages city's trees.

Brighton has lost more than a thousand Elm trees this year due to the deadly Dutch Elm disease. This compares with the 1970s when a similar number of Elm trees had to be felled after becoming infected. Dutch Elm disease is one of the most serious tree diseases in the world. Bark beetles spread the fungus that causes the disease, which triggers foliage dieback.



During the summer, a campaign was launched asking local residents to be on the look-out for infected trees. Dozens of members of the public reported sightings to ElmDisease@brighton-hove.gov.uk or to local elm expert, Peter Bourne at elm.research.pjb@gmail.com.

See the Dutch Elm Disease Spotters Guide which provides information on how to identify the disease at <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/DED-Spotters-Guide-Re-arranged-Ver-.pdf>

Residents are being urged not to buy logs for fuel if the supplier cannot guarantee they are not Elms. Logs stored in garages and sheds provide ideal breeding conditions for the bark beetle. If you suspect you have infected logs Brighton Council will remove and replace them for free. See Brighton Council's advice here:

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/elm-disease>

Native trees from Special Branch

The most recent member of the Forum - **Special Branch Tree Nursery**, is a not-for-profit organisation, run entirely by volunteers which is part of Stanmer Organics at Stanmer Park.

Special Branch grows native trees and hedgerow shrubs from Sussex sourced seeds, raising them organically for local environment and nature conservation projects. They grow around 25 native species, which they sell as bare-rooted whips between late October and end of February.

Volunteers meet every Friday to manage a wildlife friendly site at the back of Stanmer Park. It's been established since 1997 and claims to be the only nursery in Sussex to guarantee local origin for all 25 native tree species.

For more information on Special Branch visit their website at <http://www.specialbranchtrees.org.uk/>

B&H Green Spaces Forum wins Countryside Award.



The Forum has been informed that it has this year won a Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) Countryside Award. We won't know which one until later in October.. But great recognition for all green space volunteers that they have helped our City win an award of this type. For more information on the Forum's entry, have a look here

<https://www.cpresussex.org.uk/news/righton-and-hove-green-spaces-forum/>

Changing Chalk Project - how the use of our green spaces has changed.

Many thanks to all those groups who shared information on how the use their green spaces and parks has changed since lockdown. Responses were collated into a single document and shared with B&H Council Committee Chairs to highlight some of the issues and challenges. The full document can be found at <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ParkViewsLockdown2020.pdf>

Linked to this, as part of a project called 'Changing Chalk' The National Trust and partners have received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support activities and events that will help people to spend more time on the Sussex Downs. They are particularly interested in how greater engagement with nature since Covid 19 presents new opportunities to bring people and nature closer together.

Please give them your thoughts, and help them shape future project activities. The link to their survey can be found here: [Sussex Downs Changing Chalk Survey](#).

Congratulations Woodingdean Wilderness.

On 9th September at a Zoom AGM with 19 attendees, one of the Forum's newest member groups became formally constituted. The group are focusing on engaging their community members in Woodingdean with Covid safe activity ideas, fundraising ideas and a management plan. The group have built a great working relationship with CityParks Ranger Paul Gorringer who has assisted them greatly.

Wildflower Conservation Society – Brighton & beyond.



Stanmer Wildflower Conservation Society - Brighton and Beyond group, has got a new home. A polytunnel has been erected near Stanmer's new plants' nursery which is being filled with wildflower plug plants. The first plant sale will be on Sunday 27th September between 2 and 4pm. The photo shows Stanmer Wildflower Conservation Society volunteers outside their new home.

The project lead by volunteers is inspired by the work of Stanmer resident, John Gapper, known as the Green man of Sussex, who has dedicated his life's work to the preservation of native chalk grassland wildflowers. Since the 1930s there has been a sharp decline in native wild flower meadows throughout the UK.

If you are interested in volunteering with the Project contact <http://WWW.Wildflowerconservationsociety.com> or email them at wildflower.brighton@gmail.com

Five years ago, John and a group of City Parks volunteers produced over 200,000 plug plants that were reintroduced as part of the chalk grassland restoration project which led to the creation of bee and butterfly banks across the city.

St Peter's Water Butt.



Congratulations to St Peter's Churchyard Preston Park volunteers who, after over a year of hard graft, finally got their water butt installed. This group have trail blazed a minimal cost process for obtaining the necessary permissions for installing a water butt next to a historic listed building. They also found a great product for intercepting rainwater from cast iron downpipes; plus paid for it all with help from the Brighton Pride Social Impact Fund. The group are happy to share what they have learnt with others.



Volunteers struggle to keep communal gardens looking good.

The Regency Square Area Society (RSAS) gardening group looks after the communal gardens in Regency, Russell and Clarence Squares. The group formed in December 2019. By the time lock down bit, we had cleared ivy and brambles that were overwhelming one of the borders in Russell Square, and weeds and dead wood from four of the borders in Regency Square. The City Parks Rangers' volunteers made a welcome return visit to Regency Square in mid-March, to lend a hand.

In spring, the months of clearance work paid off. In Russell Square, rescued shrubs put on new growth. In Regency Square, spring flowering bulbs and shrubs looked healthy, and perennials that we'd transplanted from over-crowded sections had 'taken'.

The Russell and Clarence gardens now look well cared for, but the Regency Square garden is struggling. Its shallow soil (it's a car park roof garden) is always challenging, but this year the combination of early heat wave followed by storm force winds fried mature shrubs and new plants alike. Since lock down eased, the Regency Square garden has suffered a lot of anti-social behaviour; we're now routinely dealing with fly tipping, with shrubberies used as toilets, as well as the usual debris from drinkers, drug users. This has inflicted further damage on the borders.

Once group work resumes, we are going to need advice from City Parks on the best strategy for tending the damaged borders in Regency Square.

Gill Wales

RSAS volunteer gardening group leader

The RSAS Gardening Group can be contacted by email at rsasgardening@gmail.com

Valley Gardens - New gardens transform gateway into city.

Consultation finished earlier this month on the final phase of the Valley Gardens project, between the Old Steine and Palace Pier. The results of this consultation are expected to go before the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee in November and any new construction could start in Spring 2021 for completion by Autumn 2022.

The challenge now is to ensure the new Valley Gardens remain drugs, drink and litter free. Police have been given additional powers to manage any anti-social behaviour in the area.



This new gateway into the city has undergone a dramatic transformation with a series of interlinking paths, segregated cycle pedestrian and cycle lanes, grass and wildflowers graced by the existing fully matured elm trees which were planted in the early 19th century.

Maximise the exposure of your events and news items!

It is very easy for any green space group to upload details of Events they are holding or News items they have onto the Forum's events calendar and newsboard at <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk>

To add Events, click on 'Submit your event' and complete the form presented, you can also upload an image or poster associated with the event (must be a photo or 'jpg' type image). To add News items just click on 'Submit your news'.

To use this facility you will need to register on the website, but only once. Then it's just a case of logging in after clicking the submit event or news buttons. If you are not registered already, the site will prompt you on what steps to take.

Please do email the Forum at bhgsforum@gmail.com with any questions



The BHGSF website Home page colourfully displays member group events every month.